

## *Dominica IV Per Annun A*

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Lectio Divina by Fr. Randy Soto

### I. Lectio

A. The Northern Kingdom of Samaria had been destroyed by the Assyrians circa 722 BC. Now, some 80 years later, the eyes of the Assyrians were fixed in Jerusalem, Capital of the Kingdom of Judah. In the midst of this uncertainty and fear Prophet Zephaniah pronounced his oracles (640-630 BC). Judah has experienced its ups and downs with good Kings like Hezekiah but also with impious ones like Manasseh. Prophet Zephaniah fustigated vices, idolatry, and all forms of injustice in a desperate attempt to reform the moral of the people of God. He announced the good tidings of a bright new day in which YHWH himself will deliver the faithful rest from all destruction provided that they maintain their fidelity to the Covenant in their daily lives. It is from this proclamation that our first reading is taken from: *"I will leave among you a humble and lowly people."* The invitation is to seek for the Lord, to live our lives in conformity to the Covenant so that we may be freed from our own snares.

B. Ps 146 is an Ode to God's justice and mercy. The Lord exercises justice with the measure of his mercy, and He loves in all his divine justice. All those who suffer and are in need can recur to him pleading for Mercy and Justice, for God has promised his assistance to those who seek him with sincere heart. *"Happy the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs!"*

C. In the Second Reading, the Apostle Paul reminds the faithful of Corinth that it is not the social status, fame, wisdom or beauty what gains us a place in God's Kingdom, but rather the gift of his grace in choosing us and redeeming us in Christ Jesus. Christ is he who alone and gratuitously gives us wisdom, justice, sanctification and redemption: *"Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."*

D. Our Gospel passage comes from the first of Matthew's five big Sermons. In chapter five Matthew presents Jesus as the new Moses ascending the mountain. This time, however, the anointed one goes up not just to receive the tables of the Law (Moses), but to sit down and to give them (Jesus is also God). The Beatitudes constitute the programmatic discourse in which Christ summarizes the Christian way of living. Based upon how we have live those beatitudes we shall be judged by Christ himself when he comes again (Mt 23-25). The Beatitudes form a unity in the fact that they affirm the dignity of all human beings in the eyes of the Lord: including the poor in spirit, those who suffer, and those who are persecuted on account of Jesus.

### III. Meditatio

A. Today's readings are not meant to deliver demagogical or political invectives against the rich, or to promote a culture of protest on behalf of the poor and needy. They are meant to spur us onto an act of true conversion to the word of God. Each reading is addressed to each one in particular and not others; they call for conversion so

that we may finally recognize that God is our only richness. Thus in doing so, we become authentically “poor in spirit” and consequently become susceptible of receiving the beatitudes as a gift from God in our lives.

B. To become the faithful rest spoken by Zephaniah we are invited to rescind all human power, any idea of self-sufficiency, all human wisdom and abandon ourselves into the hands of Jesus Christ who comes to us as a Good Shepherd to feed us with his love, his justice and the gifts of salvation and sanctification.

C. The Beatitudes are meant to be for us the sure way to trust and to give ourselves confidently to God’s salvific plan. Christ has assured us of his assistance in this venue which only leads to the promise Land in the Heavenly Kingdom. And the manner in which we walk in this road of “Evangelical Poverty” is none other than **joy**: “Rejoice and be glad; your reward will be great in heaven.” St. Francis of Assisi stands in history as a man who understood perfectly the way of the Beatitudes and was joyful to live Evangelical Poverty to its fullness.

### III. Oratio

We begin our celebration by asking with Ps 105: “that we may proclaim your holy name and glory in your praise” (Introit); then we declare the we believe and hold firmly the summary of the Law offered by Jesus himself: “help us to love you with all our hearts and to love all men as you love them” (OP); At the Offertory we ask the Lord: “to be pleased with the gifts we bring to your altar, and make them the sacrament of our salvation” (PG). A good choice of preface for Today’s liturgy would be Preface IV: “By his birth we are reborn. In his suffering we are freed from sin. By his rising from the dead we rise to everlasting life. In his return to you in glory we enter into your heavenly kingdom.” (Preface). During Communion, as we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus, we echo the Gospel’s verse: “Happy are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs! Happy are the lowly; they shall inherit the land” (CA). We conclude our celebration by calling out to God: “By this Eucharist give the true faith continued growth throughout the world” (PC).

### III. Contemplatio

For a Contemplative meditation on the Beatitudes you may check Fr. Hardon’s Meditations: [http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Beatitudes/Beatitudes\\_005.htm](http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Beatitudes/Beatitudes_005.htm)

### *Dialogued Prayer on the Beatitudes*

Lord Jesus, you said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Keep us from being preoccupied with money and worldly goods, and with trying to increase them at the expense of justice.

Lord Jesus, you said, “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.” Help us not to be ruthless with one

*another, and to eliminate the discord and violence that exists in the world around us.*

*Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Let us not be impatient under our own burdens and unconcerned about the burdens of others.*

*Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be filled." Make us thirst for you, the fountain of all holiness, and actively spread your influence in our private lives and in society.*

*Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." Grant that we may be quick to forgive and slow to condemn.*

*Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." Free us from our senses and our evil desires, and fix our eyes on you.*

*Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." Aid us to make peace in our families, in our country, and in the world.*

*Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs." Make us willing to suffer for the sake of right rather than to practice injustice; and do not let us discriminate against our neighbors and oppress and persecute them.*